This document is best to read on desktop. The formatting is broken on mobile and descriptions/images might not be displayed correctly.

✦ HOW TO BE A FREELANCE ARTIST ✦

Guide by @Zmeinir

This guide compiles key advice and resources to become a freelance artist online.

DISCLAIMER: The advice in this document comes from **my own experience** as a freelance artist working online for the past three years, and also as a client and art enjoyer. Most examples shown are either taken from my real work and socials, or from well known successful artists'. I'm not sharing my own stuff to show off, but because talking from my perspective is the easiest way for me to demonstrate the things I talk about since I implement them in my own work.

Obviously I'm not perfect, and **this isn't a "do it exactly this way" guide**, just what has worked for me. I've tried to cover everything I could think of but it's a really large topic and it was a bit hard to organize. Also I'm ESL so please bear with me if there's any English mistakes!

In this document, I will mostly show examples of character art because this is what I know best, but all the advice in this document is also valid for any other artistic fields. I've credited every artist whose work I show but if you would like it removed, please let me know.

I allow translations of the document but please respect these rules:

- **Include a link to my original post along with my credit easily visible**
- **Keep all credits and links intact**
- **Do not alter the content in any way other than the language**
- **State that it is a translation**

Update 06/12: Added a dedicated section to growing your audience on Twitter/X

Added some more links to the Tools & Resources section.

Last update 13/12: Added links about the new algo in the Twitter/X section (it's highlighted).

NEVER USE AI, STOLEN, COPIED OR TRACED ARTWORKS TO TAKE COMMISSIONS.

Feel free to reach out if you have anything you'd like to add, correct, or discuss!

✦ INTRODUCTION ✦

Becoming a professional commission artist is about more than just drawing, animating, designing.., but it doesn't have to feel overwhelming. I won't sugarcoat it, to be successful as an artist you *will* have to work hard. You'll have to manage your schedule, talk to clients, market yourself, etc.. *But* with good communication, basic organization, and practice, you can build a great commission workflow.

This guide will show you the main steps to help you start taking commissions or to get better!

✦ GETTING STARTED ✦

› What type of artist are you?

Evaluate your skills

Before anything, evaluate your current strengths and weaknesses.

Take a moment to be honest and realistic with yourself about where you're at in your art journey. Ask yourself (or an exterior person) whether your current skills feel solid enough for you to start offering commissions, or if you need more practice.

Everyone improves at a different pace, and polishing your art skills and style before opening commissions can be a good idea depending on your current level. **I will not discuss how to improve art skills in this guide since it's an entirely different topic and would need a separate guide.**

If you're not ready yet, don't be discouraged, every successful artist started somewhere. I know taking comms is exciting, but don't rush it.

Choose a direction

Identify your preferred niche *(character art, concept design, specific fandom, backgrounds, mechas, etc)*. Aim to specialize in one or two types of artworks maximum. This helps cater to a target audience instead of going everywhere with no real direction or theme.

To identify a profitable niche, look at the demand. Popular fandoms, or regular clients (such as VTubers or content creators) usually always have demand for artists to commission. I would generally avoid already crowded markets (emotes for example) unless you're confident you can stand out.

What you choose to start with is not forever set in stone, but will act as a stepping stone to get you out there. My current target audience is VTubers, but it could be a specific video-game or anime fandom, or simply one type of artwork you specialize in (like doing backgrounds only).

You can look at my portfolio if you would like an example of what my gallery looks like as a VTuber-focused artist.

Chances are if you just do "your own thing" and post *totally different things* every time, unless you have insane art skills, you won't really get far.

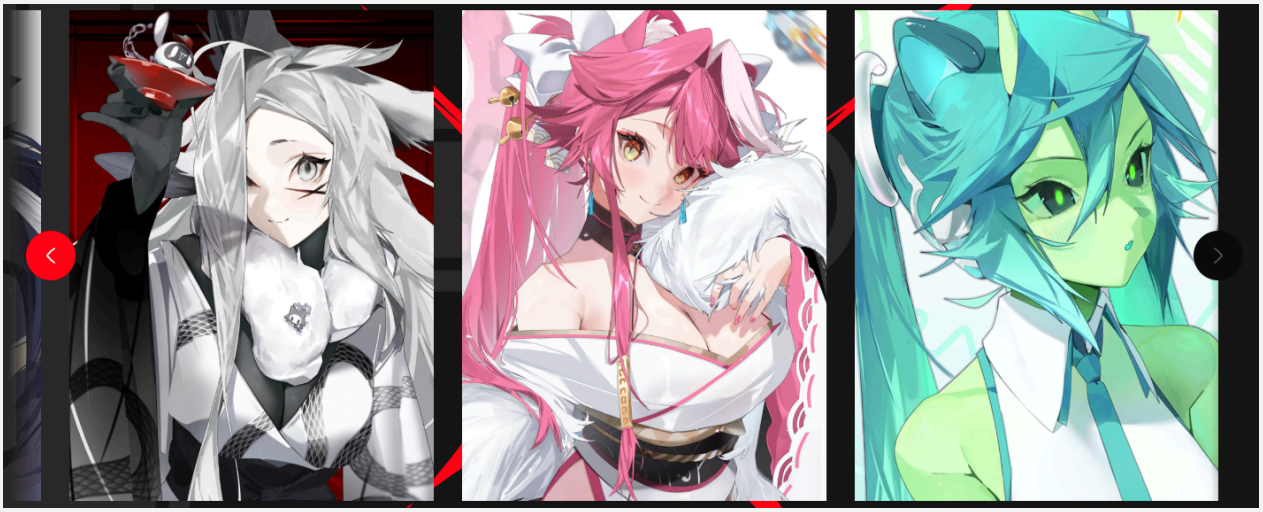
› Building Your Portfolio

Your portfolio is often your potential clients first impression and it should be prepared before the rest, which is why I'm explaining it early in this document.

Create artworks you can be proud of that will represent your art style and skills. Aim for a selection that shows range, consistency, and artstyle. Avoid overcrowding, quality matters more than quantity.

Good examples: The characters have varied poses, interesting composition, eye-catching color palettes or easily identifiable art style.

This is the website gallery of **@DyaRikku**. It is a great example because the poses and characters are wide-ranging, the style is immediately identifiable and consistent. Colors are varied and eye-catching, the artworks feel full and interesting and show the artist skills in composition.



Bad examples would be: The characters all have the same face angle and pose, there's only examples of the same character, there's no effort in presentation/composition, images are low resolution, blurry or pixelated.

✦ BRANDING & ONLINE PRESENCE ✦

❯ Social medias & platforms

I would recommend choosing **one dedicated social media** *(Instagram, Twitter/X, TikTok, Bluesky)* to be your main one to avoid being overwhelmed by several account managements. I'm only active on Twitter and **I don't have any other social media**. You can be successful even if you only post to one social.

TWITTER/X

There's no miracle recipe to succeeding on Twitter/X, but I will list some tips & tricks to grow an audience below.

Art trends:

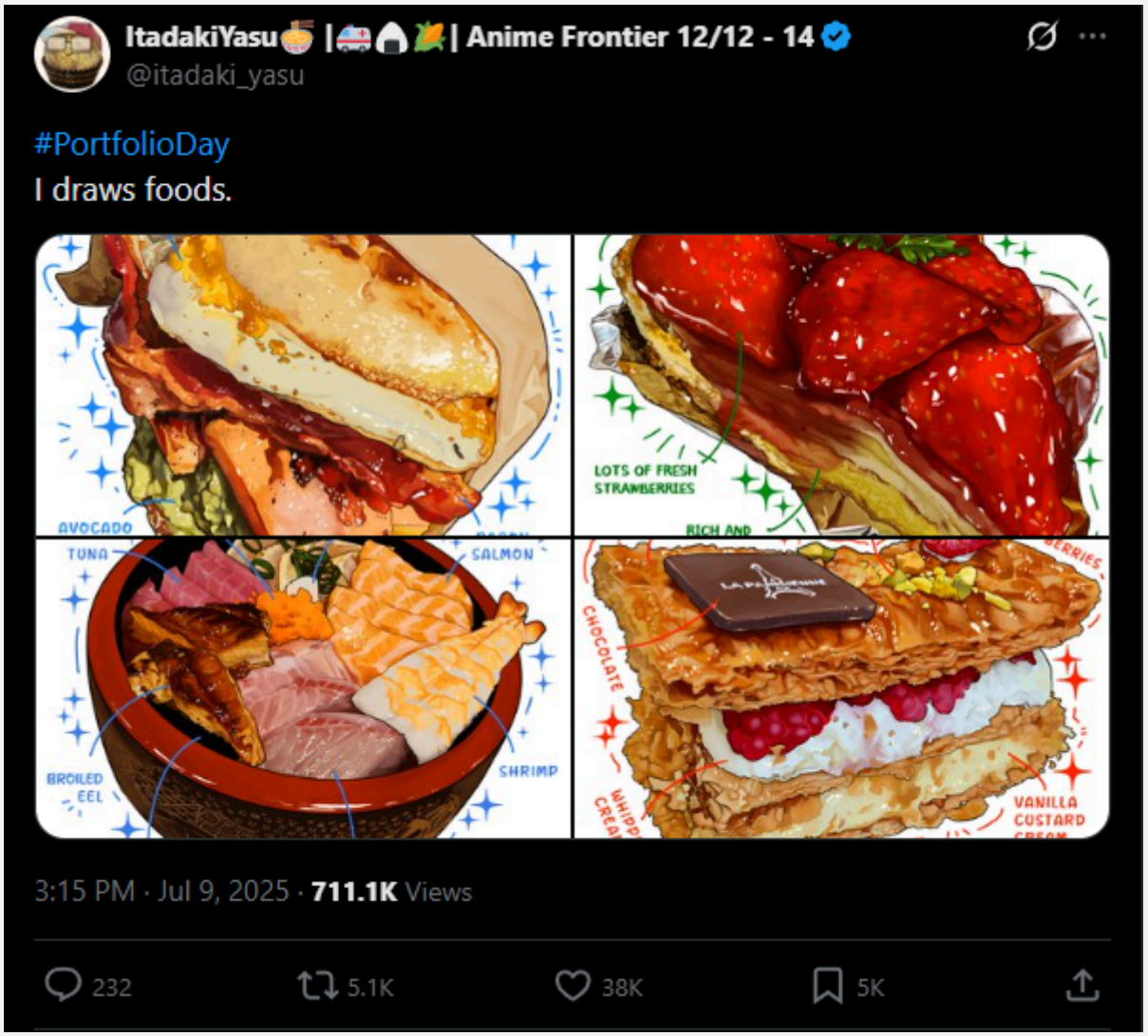
I would recommend hopping on artists trends and being an active member of the art community to train your algorithm to show you these types of posts.

You can participate in momentary art trends, for example the Frieren trend that started with @SpaceDev1158 artwork, or the Brazilian Miku trend started by @ErinArtista

You should definitely participate in all time popular trends/posts. Here are a few:

- #PortfolioDay: This trend is ideal to introduce yourself and show what's your style at a glance. Keep it short and visually appealing. This trend happens around the 9th of every month.

Original post by @itadaki_yasu



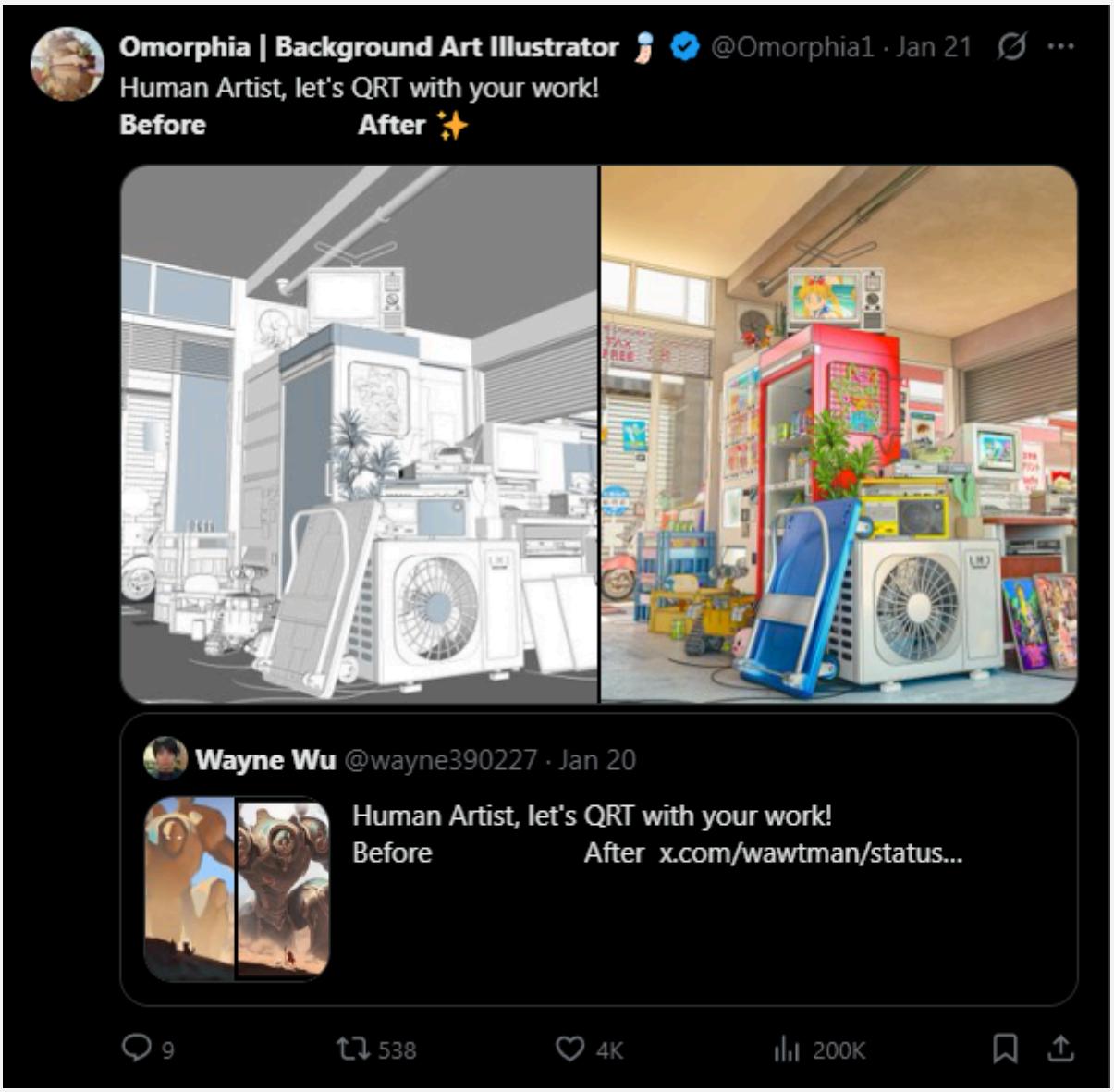
- VTuber Eyes/Eyes zoom-in in general: People really enjoy seeing zoom in art of eyes in general. These types of posts look aesthetic and eye-catching. (haha, get it)

[Original post](#) by a cool artist *wink* (haha, get it)[2]

- [Before & After](#): This is a really common post amongst artists to show growth and it's your time to impress people with your improvement, and also take a step back to see how far you've come.

  This trend can also be related to before(sketch) & after(finished art) which is nice to show some behind the scenes work. Both are popular.

Original post by @Omorphia1

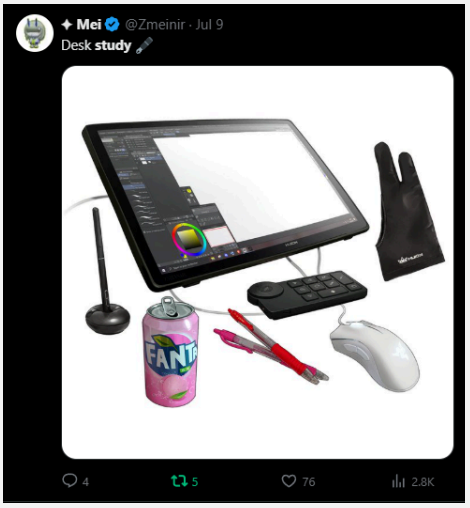


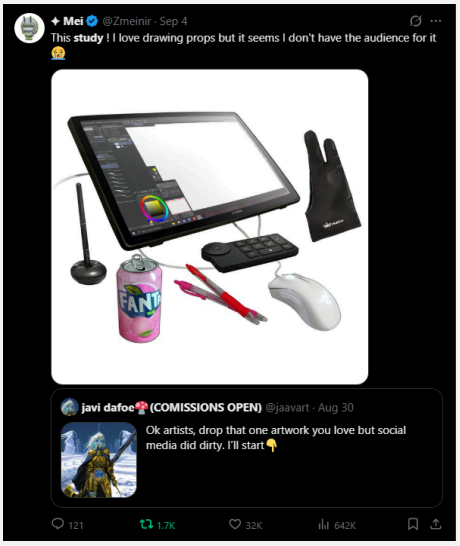
- My art is good, the algorithm just ignores me.: This trend is good to share your frustration towards the algorithm without self-depreciating and it tends to make people interact to 'fix the algo'.

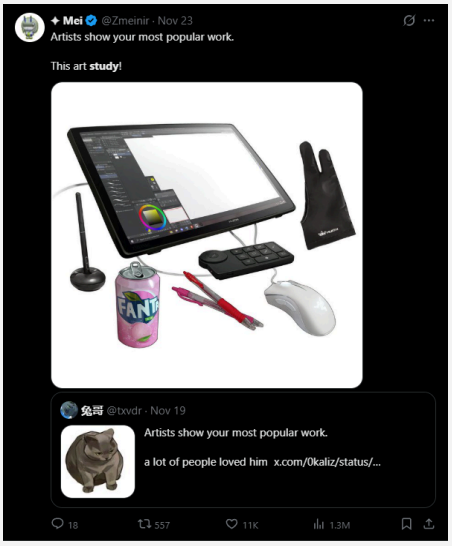
Original post by @wishpetal

wish (working on comms!) @wishpetal · Jul 25
My art is good, the algorithm just ignores me
My art is good, the algorithm just ignores me
My art is good, the algorithm just ignores me
My art is good, the algorithm ignores me
My art is good, the algorithm just ignores me
My art is good, the algorithm just ignores me
899
6.4K
104K
1.4M

Don't be afraid to reuse your artworks. For example, I posted the same artwork 3 times and each touched a very different audience. As you can see the ones that quoted an artist trend did really well.




✦ Mei @Zmeinir · Sep 4
This study ! I love drawing props but it seems I don't have the audience for it
javi dafoe (COMISSIONS OPEN) @jaavart · Aug 30
Ok artists, drop that one artwork you love but social media did dirty. I'll start


✦ Mei @Zmeinir · Nov 23
Artists show your most popular work.
This art study!
兔哥 @txvdr · Nov 19
Artists show your most popular work.
a lot of people loved him x.com/0kaliz/status/...

[First post](#) (76 ♡) [Second post](#) (32k ♡)
[Third post](#) (11k ♡, 1.3M views!)

Trends or popular types of posts like these usually drive higher engagement than regular posts, and also allow you to reuse your artworks without having to burn yourself out creating new ones, if you're too busy, or have nothing new to post. Even if your post on a trend doesn't get much engagement, it still trains the algo to show you more of them so it's useful to not miss out.

Bad engagement doesn't mean your art is bad, but the algorithm is rough to work with for artists. Keep trying.

Other general Twitter advice:

Avoid self-depreciating or desperate behavior. You're not creating a positive space by feeling sorry for yourself, or regularly posting things like *'My art is so bad, I don't get any comms'*, etc. This *could* also be perceived as attention seeker or victim-like behavior, so be careful of that.

Try to make engaging captions, post quality images. Less is usually more for captions, but ultimately there's a bit of luck involved in what pops off or not. In general, avoid many hashtags, links, and poorly cropped images.

If you post fanart, make sure to use the official tag if any. For example with VTubers, you can usually find their art tag in their bios. If you want to make targeted fanart of popular characters, look at who and what gets the most engagement.

Avoid spamming posts and reposts. Keep a balanced posting rhythm, usually 3-4 times a week ideally for artwork posts. I generally recommend posting after work hours and Friday afternoon in the USA, but that depends on your target audience.

Don't get the blue check if you have less than 1,000+ followers. Many bots and scams accounts with small followers count have it and you don't want to be put in the same bag as them.

Read the room. Don't self-promote where it isn't appropriate. For example if a client shares their negative experience with an artist, don't go at them saying *"well I'M not like them, you should commission me!"*

If nothing really works, you might want to try and practice more. I would recommend watching Naoki Saito's correction playlist to improve. It helps to train your eye to notice mistakes and possible ways to improve an artwork quickly. I bingewatched all of it and it's like, the BEST advice to improve quickly when you already have basic knowledge.

Here is a useful thread on how Twitter/X's algorithm works but keep in mind it's not an exact science and it can change. **Update: the algorithm has changed for the Grok algo, here is another useful thread and my thoughts on the new algo**.

For Twitter/X media resolution size, you can refer to this Twitter/X Image Size Guide Template or this Twitter/X guide for Clip Studio Paint.

I will not give advice specific to Instagram, TikTok and Bluesky because I don't use them, but the general advice in this section can be useful on any social media.

If you want to be active on multiple socials, you can use a website to help with social media management & scheduling like Buffer. If you want to check if you're shadowbanned, you can use IRith.io. I will give more advice on social media accounts here.

Other platforms:

You can also register on artistic platforms such as **VGen** or **Ko-Fi** (commissions and shop), or Patreon for memberships but this one is only useful for already well established artists.

- **VGEN:**

Generally VGen would be a good starting point for artists to receive commissions easily and to study the market. It can also reassure clients to go through a platform instead of a direct commission. Keep in mind VGen charges a 5% service fee on your commissions.

- **KO-FI:**

  Ko-fi has no research function so it's not as efficient to take commissions. It is great to set up a shop if you want to start with some free assets, or to receive donations for example. It is more secondary for a beginner artist but it is still useful.

Other platforms to consider if you would like to stream your art process are **Twitch** and **YouTube**, but I'm not knowledgeable about it so I won't speak on that topic.

I would recommend avoiding Fiverr and Etsy since they host a lot of AI / scammy content and are not really art focused.

I would also recommend making a clean new email for all your freelance art related accounts.

› How to improve your account

You need to be self conscious of your behavior on social media. This is the internet, everything you say is public. Be careful of your online reputation, you could miss opportunities because of bad behavior like *using slurs, engaging in dramas repeatedly, toxic behavior, harassment, etc.* **I do not condone any toxic behavior anywhere in general**.

If you simply want to vent or talk about any controversial topic, it's better to just create an alt account.

To start with your profile, you need to create a **visually appealing and comprehensive bio** with key information such as *your specialty, links to your platforms/website, commission status*, etc. You can also include a general link to all your platforms using Linktree or Carrd if you have too many *(Here is my general link for reference)* I will give more advice on making a website here.

Here are some good bio examples:

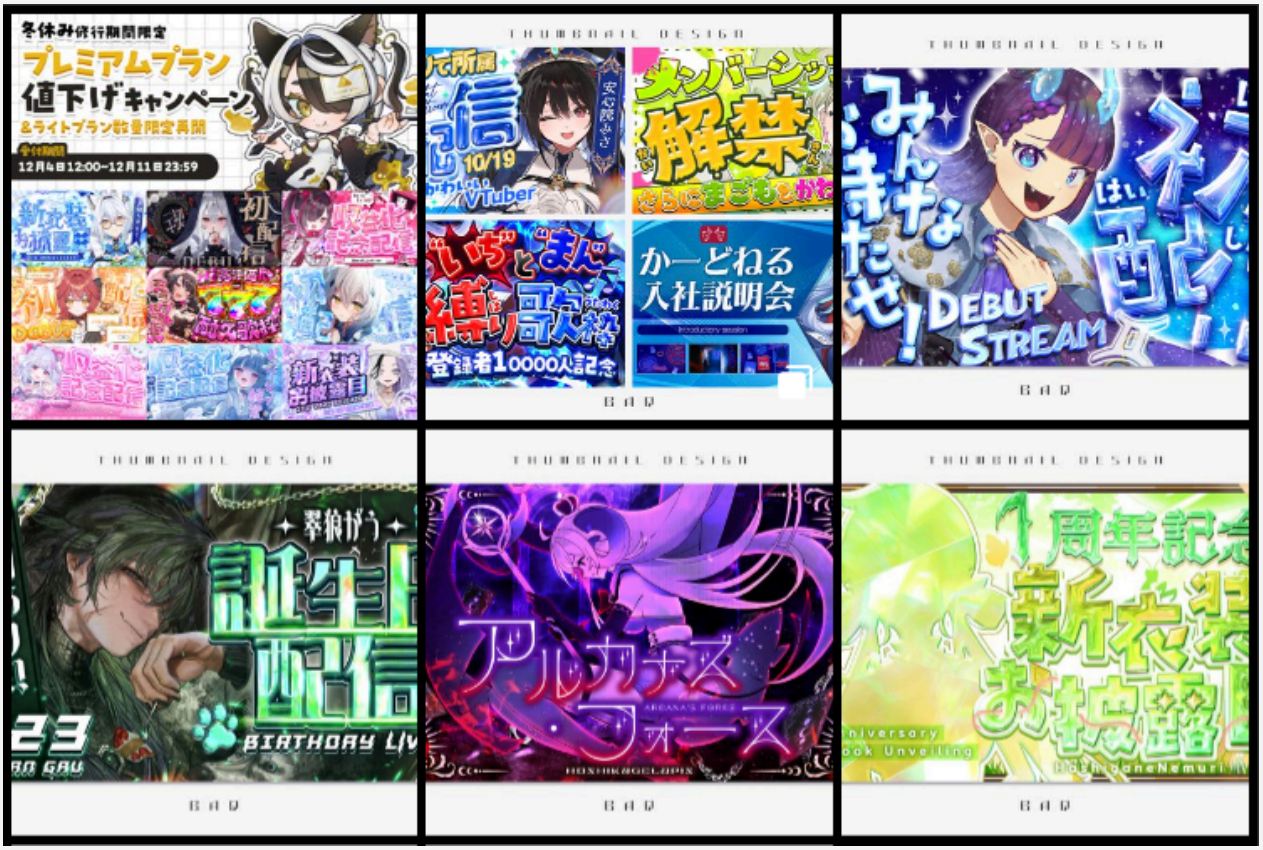
@Akizone account

@Nanoless account

The presentation is clear and easily readable, the links are properly labeled and easy to access, additional information that might be needed like credit or code are displayed. *(This is a good reminder that I should update mine..)*

You should also be mindful of the media you post in general. If your art is great but it's buried under dozens of *reaction gifs and images*, or giveaway participations and other stuff, your account will not be as appealing and some people might just give up looking for your art or following you.

Here is a good media tab examples:



[BAQ (@B_A_9_X)](#) **account**

This artist posts well presented and consistent work. You don't have to keep scrolling to see their work clearly.

For profile picture and banner, there's no strict rule but I would generally recommend using your own art or something eye-catching since it's the first thing you'll see on a social media profile. You can use your *OCs, a specific fandom's fanart, something related to your brand's aesthetic or to your personality* like something funny.

Personal Branding (Optional but recommended)

Define your online identity through consistent visuals, tone, and messaging. You can use simple branding elements such as a logo, signature, and cohesive color palette to make your profile appealing and pleasing to look at, and also easily identifiable.

For example if you have an OC or Sona, you can use their color palettes and aesthetic to represent your brand.

FREE-LANCE ARTIST

NAME	MEI
LANGAGE	FR / EN
TIMEZONE	UTC+2

✦ I'm a full-time freelance artist and character designer for a living.

✦ **Tablet:** HUION Kamvas 24 Plus

✦ **Software:** Clip Studio Paint

There are thousands of artists out there, standing out is definitely a good point even if it's not always necessary! I personally find it enjoyable to make my content aesthetic and it makes me happy to work on, which can help be motivated especially for tedious tasks like building your website, etc.

✦ WEBSITE & COMMISSION PAGE ✦

After you've determined your audience, aesthetic, and gathered enough artworks to build a solid portfolio, you can start your artist website! *YAYYYY*

Don't pressure yourself into making the perfect website right away, it takes time and experience to achieve a really complete website. For reference, I've rebuilt my website 3 times and I still update my TOS, portfolio and examples regularly! Even as I'm writing this document looking for resources, I get some new ideas to improve my website I just can't stop!!!

› Website building

Commission Page Essentials

For each category, I'll link my own website's pages. Please note my website isn't perfect and just serves as a reference here.

› **HOME PAGE (optional):** Unnecessary if you choose to make a one-page website. If you make a home page, it should have buttons to easily access the other pages and a good presentation.

› **TERMS OF SERVICE (TOS):** I will detail how to create your Terms of Service here.

› **COMMISSION PRICES:** I will detail how to prepare your prices page here.

› **PORTFOLIO:** I detailed how to build a portfolio in this section.

› **ABOUT (optional):** A small section to talk about yourself, where you're from, your setup of whatever information that is related to your experience or personality as an artist or as a person.

I'm not a web designer and I'm broke so I've made my website myself using Carrd. Carrd is just a really easy and intuitive way to build your website **for free**, which is why you'll see a lot of artists use it to create their website.

If you're not sure where to start, you can use a carrd template or hire someone to create a customized template/website for you (Many people offer Carrd design service on VGen!).

Even if you use a template, you can easily change every element. It can be intimidating at first, but try it yourself and you'll see it's not that complicated!

If you join Carrd and buy any plan option, use my referral link or code *5PYY4MY8* to support me ♡

› Commission prices

To determine your commission prices, think about how much time, effort, and skill each piece takes you. For example, you can look at how long a typical artwork takes you then multiply by a reasonable hourly rate.

If that doesn't seem accurate, check what other artists with similar level and style are charging. You don't have to copy them, it's more so to get an idea.

Don't take well established artists as a price reference. They likely have a high demand and high prices because of their popularity so it's not really a good example for a beginner or small artist.

Separate your listings in categories:

- Headshot, half-body, thigh-up, full body
- Sketch or rendered
- Full illustration with background
- Chibi

Add extra fees for anything that takes more work than usual:

- Backgrounds

- Props or creature
- Complex design (Usually in added %)
- Extra characters
- Rush orders

These are just the most common listings and add-ons artists offer, but you can adjust it to match your own needs.

Start simple! You can always adjust your rates and listings as you gain experience, confidence and build your portfolio. It's common practice to raise prices along with the demand once you start growing.

› Terms of Service (TOS)

Write thorough TOS that cover **payment rules, usage rights, refund policies, revision limits, AI policy and what you will or won't draw**. This protects both you and your clients and prevents misunderstandings.

Please note I won't write your TOS for you, these are just key information. Every artist's TOS is different even if there are similarities, and I believe it's better to write them yourself to get familiar with it instead of just copy/pasting some ready TOS.

Here are the categories I would recommend including to get started.

GENERAL

In this section, keep it short and focus on essentials

- **Artist rights:** State that clients are purchasing your services, not the copyright. You keep ownership and can promote your work.
- **Client rules:** Explain what clients can and cannot do with the art (no commercial use unless purchased, no copying or claiming as their own, editing the artwork, must credit you, etc).

AI POLICY

Clearly state that clients are **not allowed to use your artwork in any AI tool** in any way. This includes altering the art with AI, feeding it to AI models, or using it to mimic your style. Protect yourself!

COMMERCIAL RIGHTS RATES

In this section, state your commercial rates. Refer to this category for commercial rights advice.

PAYMENT PROCESS

State your payment method and process *(upfront, through PayPal, your chosen currency, etc)*. I've detailed payment methods some more here.

REFUNDS & CANCELLATIONS POLICY

In this section, you need to explain:

- Whether refunds are possible once work has begun, and under what conditions.
- What happens if you can't complete the commission.
- Can you or the client cancel a commission before payment.

TIMELINE & PROCESS

In this section, you need to explain:

- Whether clients can request deadlines
- That you will inform clients of any delays that affect the delivery time.
- That you may refuse projects with unrealistic timeframes.
- What your average turnaround time is (even a rough estimate)
- Whether you offer rush fees and how they work.

Explain how you handle the commission process:

- When can clients expect the first sketch/update.
- What stages your process usually includes (for example sketch → lineart → colors → final).
- That clients should mention any specific size or format requirements before you start.
- The delivery method for finished files

REVISIONS POLICY

In this section, clarify your revision rules by explaining:

- How many major revisions clients can request and at what stages.
- That extra revisions beyond the limit may come with additional fees.
- That clients might pay an extra fee for design changes or things that weren't initially stated in the request.

DO'S & DON'TS

State what you do and do not draw, for example NSFW, mecha, furry, etc.

✦ HOW TO MARKET YOURSELF ✦

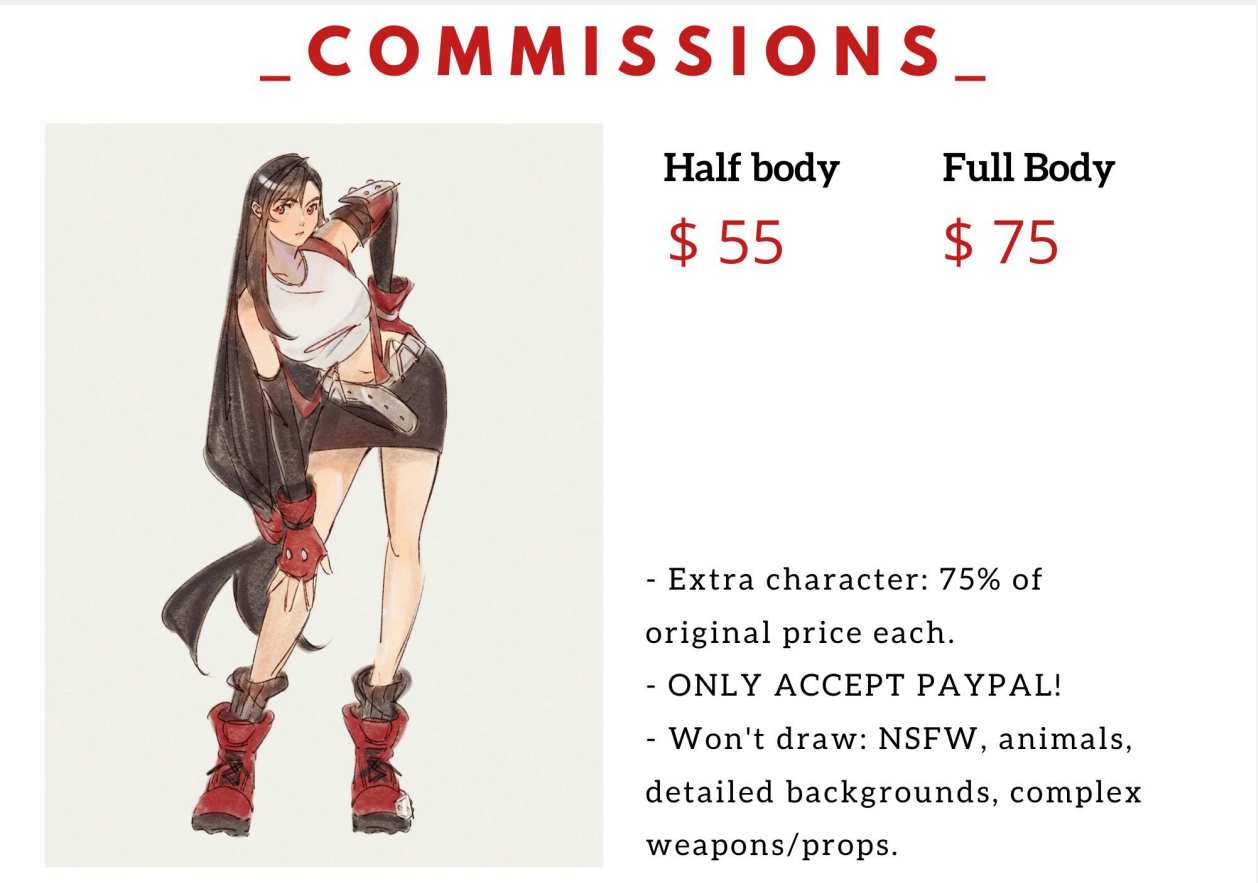
First, study the market. Even if what works for others might not work for you, you can always learn from looking at examples from well-established artists. Pay attention to how other artists in your field present their commission openings, pricing, and services. This helps you understand client expectations, see what is popular, and take a step back on your own approach.

You can plan promotions around events or holidays, for example, holiday themed YCH commission, organize a commission sale on Black Friday. Limited-time offers, small discounts for first-time clients, or loyalty bonuses can encourage commissions and repeat business.

Post your milestones, celebrate getting your first commission, show people that you're active and motivated. If you don't have anything like this to post, just keep up with regular artworks or engage with trends. Don't be afraid to interact with your community, ask them if there's any type of comm they would be interested in, etc.

When you make a commission post announcement, don't just post *"comms opened!"*, but think of it as an ad. Make it appealing, easy to read and identify. Specify the number of slots, the type of comms, turnaround time, add a commission sheet image.

Here is an example of Marie (@MmarieSr) commission sheet (Original post)



Now you might say *'yeah but I've already detailed all that on my website, they can just go look at it!'* This is social media. Lots of people will just scroll past your post in a second if it doesn't catch their eye. Easy and immediate information helps grab a client's attention.

Overall, marketing yourself involves juggling with different things so I would recommend reading the Online presence and Website categories.

✦ WORKFLOW & COMMUNICATION ✦

Now that everything is ready, how to *actually* act during a commission?

› Point of contact

Make sure you've enabled Direct Messages on your social media account so clients can contact you easily if they come across one of your posts. You will receive some bot spam sadly but it usually gets filtered in the spam box. *Usually*

You can receive requests directly through VGen, but make sure to promote your commission opening on your socials too.

You can open a business email but honestly in 3 years, I haven't gotten a single commission request through email, even from companies. I've always been contacted through Twitter or Discord. You can still make one just in case, especially to use on all your art-related accounts.

You can also use a Google form to collect the necessary information to apply for your commissions if you're more of an introvert.

› Client Communication from A to Z

You must communicate with your client! Lack of communication is a big issue in the commission community and it should be fixed. Clients might avoid you because of that even if your art is great!

Being introverted or having personal issues doesn't mean you can skip communication. Life happens, and clients will usually understand but **only if you let them know**. Think of it like any other job: you wouldn't just disappear without saying anything. You don't have to share personal details, even a simple *'Sorry for the delay, I've been dealing with some personal issues'* is enough and will reassure your client.

BE RESPONSIBLE, THIS BECOMES YOUR JOB THE MOMENT YOU RECEIVE MONEY.

General communication

Even if the first contact happened through social media, I would recommend continuing discussion on **Discord**. You can send images in batch and in better quality, pin links or information needed for the commission, and structure your messages. Also cat emotes.

Generally, also avoid being unnecessarily friendly or personal. For example, one time I asked an artist for an update on my comm because they went radio silent. They proceeded to tell me they were going to go shower now, but they'll send me an update after dinner because they're really hungry. This is unprofessional behavior, please don't do that. Instead, simply tell your client that you will update them at a later time.

Accepting the request

Show interest:
Start by acknowledging their request and show genuine interest about their project, make them feel welcome and comfortable. A simple message like *"Thank you so much for your interest!"* helps to create a positive first impression. You can also share your feelings, for example let them know if you found their character especially cute, or if you're excited to work on their idea.

Ask for references and details:
To understand what the client wants, ask for any references they have: character sheets, illustrations, moodboards, pose ideas, color palettes, or anything else that would help better envision the project. Ask them if they need commercial rights, NDA, or a deadline. Make sure you have every element you need to start working.

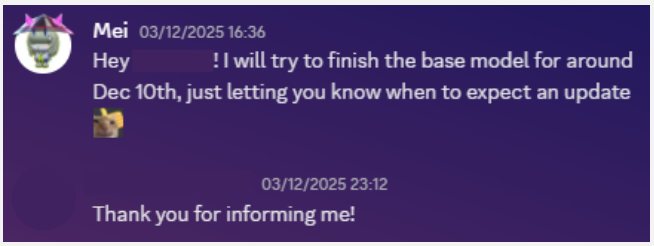
Confirm the request:
Before you agree to start, quickly recapitulate the request. This helps avoid misunderstandings and shows professionalism.

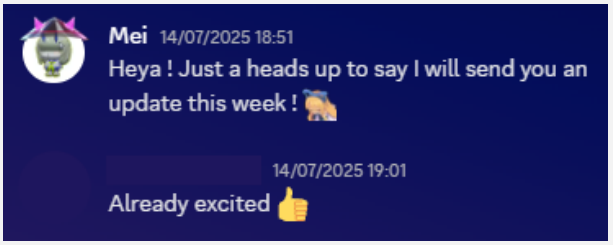
Confirm the price and payment method:
Once the request is clear, confirm the final price and method of payment. Make sure the client agrees to the price and your Terms of Service before you begin. For larger projects, you can also establish a quote.

For your own workflow and comfort, I would recommend downloading the references provided by the client right away and organizing them in a folder to their name.

Sending updates

Usually at each main stage of the commission, for example if it's a character art, send an update for *sketch, lineart, color draft, rendering (This can depend on your art style and workflow).* Let your client know when to expect an update.


Mei 03/12/2025 16:36
Hey ! I will try to finish the base model for around Dec 10th, just letting you know when to expect an update
03/12/2025 23:12
Thank you for informing me!

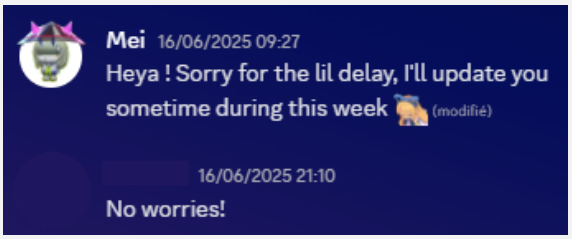


Clients will pretty much always have a positive answer to your updates, so don't be afraid.

If your client spams you for updates in short periods of time, which can happen, reassure them with a set timeline you'll update them in. This is not good client etiquette, but it's still your client.

Communicate any delays

We're humans so of course delays can happen. But don't let your client stay in the dark and let them know if it happens. Keep in mind delays shouldn't become a recurring pattern.


Mei 16/06/2025 09:27
Heya ! Sorry for the lil delay, I'll update you sometime during this week (modifié)
16/06/2025 21:10
No worries!

Avoiding the problem by not communicating will just make it worse. Clients will be comprehensive most of the time unless there is a deadline, in which case you should avoid delays at all costs.

Never ghost your client

This is SO obvious yet some artists still do it. *You're late? You're not happy with the character? You have personal problems?* **THIS IS NOT YOUR CLIENT'S PROBLEM**. They paid you, they should receive their commission. **If really you are unable to continue with the commission for any reason, offer a refund.**

Delivering the commission

Apply final revisions:
Make any adjustments that fit within your TOS. If the client asks for changes outside the agreement, explain that extra fees may apply.

Deliver the final files:
After approval, send the full resolution files (PNG, PSD, or any files that were agreed on). Stay consistent with what you promised in your TOS. You can send the final files through a private Google Drive link for example.

Close the interaction:
Thank your client to leave a good impression and encourage future commissions. If you plan to share the artwork, ask for the client's permission and whether they want to be tagged on socials or not.

Update your queue:
Make sure to update your commission queue when you're done if you have one!

› How to stay organized

Take breaks. Don't overwhelm yourself even if you're in the zone with a burst of inspiration. If you burn the candle too fast, you'll just end up burning yourself out.

Don't allow yourself to get distracted by other stuff when you start working. Put your phone away, close YouTube or any other tabs. If needed, plan daily tasks or dedicated moments of the day to working only.

Make sure to respect any deadlines you've agreed on.

By not doing so, you could potentially ruin a client's announcement, debut, or important event. You will also ruin the trust they had for you, any chance of future commission with them, and your reputation could suffer from it.

If you can't make the deadline, you should decline the commission and not accept it from the start.

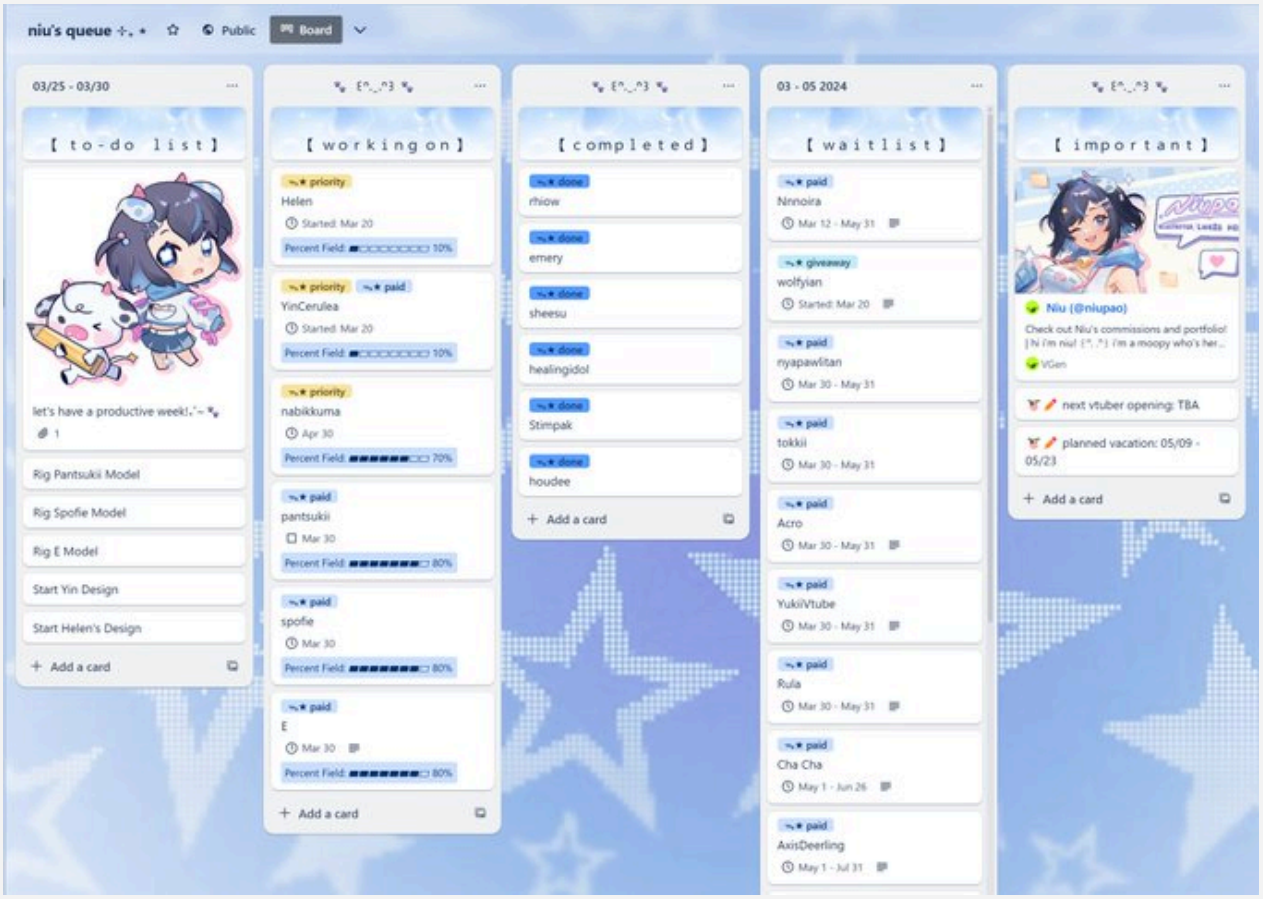
Commission queue

You can rely on a website like Trello to stay organized and keep up with your *active commissions, waitlist if any, commission stage and deadlines*.

Be careful not to add any information the client didn't agree to make public, such as their name, nature of the project, etc. In that case you can simply label the card as 'NDA' or something anonymous.

You can also choose to keep your board private if it's only for your own schedule and not for a public queue.

Here is an example of Niu (@niupao) Trello board (Original post)



I would really recommend using it, also it's free and really easy to use! If you're not sure how to structure it, try to look at how freelance artists use their Trello.

Some useful links related to Trello

Trello tutorial in 10 minutes

How to use Trello for beginners

Create an aesthetic Trello Board

✦ PAYMENT & BUSINESS ✦

› Payment Methods

Use safe, trusted payment platforms such as **PayPal** (I'm not familiar with other payment methods so I won't talk about it).

Request payment upfront or in split payments to minimize risk and avoid scams. I would recommend setting up a Business PayPal and sending an invoice for clarity and professionalism. Sending an invoice might also be required if you're a registered freelancer depending on where you live.

Never request payment through "friends & family" since there's no buyer protection and is well known as scammy behavior.

Never request your client to pay PayPal fees. This is against PayPal Terms of Service on top of being dishonest behavior if it wasn't disclosed in your price list.

› Legal aspects

Business

You're responsible for checking whether your region requires a business license, whether you need to apply taxes, etc. If you aim to make a steady income as a full time artist, be wary of your region's laws.

Keep organized income records in case a problem occurs and for your own finance organization.

Copyright and commercial use

When a client buys a commission, they are paying for the artwork itself, not the copyright. By default, you keep the copyright to everything you create, which means you remain the owner of the artwork's intellectual rights.

Personal Use Rights

This is the standard for most commissions. The client can use the art for personal enjoyment, but isn't allowed to make money from it.

This usually includes but is not limited to: *using the artwork for avatars, post on social media, private printing (not for sale)*.

Commercial Rights

Commercial rights allow the client to use the artwork to generate income, promote a brand or project, which usually involves an extra fee, often priced as an added percentage (But not always, it's up to you to charge extra for it or not).

This usually includes but is not limited to: *merchandising, promotional materials, game assets.*

- **Partial commercial rights:** Limited commercial use. It's usually for streaming or any promotional use that isn't merchandise.
- **Full commercial rights:** Merchandise selling. It's usually +100% of the base price.
- **Full copyright transfer:** You give up all rights permanently. This should be very expensive, and many artists do not offer it. For regular commissions, you will likely never encounter it.

Make sure to ask your client whether they will need commercial rights or not beforehand.

When would full copyright be needed?
Usually only when the artwork becomes part of a long-term brand or product where the client must legally own the asset, such as a company logo, a book cover design for a large publisher, or a character that will be used in a commercial series or franchise.

Why does it matter?
Beginners often give away commercial rights without realizing their value. Understanding rights helps you protect your work, price fairly, and avoid misunderstandings. For example, if you give away commercial rights for free and the client uses your artwork to sell merchandise, you are missing out on fair compensation unless you intentionally allowed it.

✦ TOOLS & RESOURCES ✦

Softwares

Popular art programs for illustration include (but are not limited to): Clip Studio Paint, Procreate, Photoshop, iBis Paint.

I personally prefer CSP because the options are really convenient for illustration and the interface is highly adjustable. The brushes and assets bank is also HUGE!

These videos really helped me when I learned CSP for the first time. I would recommend watching them even if you know the software already since you might learn a few useful tips.

CLIP STUDIO PAINT - 50 Quick Tips & Tricks You Need / 50 MORE Tips & Tricks You Need

Useful websites or links

Milanote: It's a free to use website to organize your ideas and references into moodboards. I personally use Milanote for all of my projects because it's really convenient and intuitive. Don't mind me it's my referral link so I can get additional free cards hehe

Rednote: **Rednote** is a free chinese app where you can easily research art tricks even in english keywords *(amongst other stuff, it's not an art app)* but I find it's really useful since chinese artists are cracked, plus you can also download videos from there.

Discord commission servers: These can be great for beginners, I got a few commissions from those when I started: Artists Corner, Art&Commissions, Art Commissions.

Artwork corrections by Naoki Saito: I would recommend watching Naoki Saito's correction playlist to improve. It helps to train your eye to notice mistakes and possible ways to improve an artwork quickly. He gives the BEST advice to step up your artworks quickly when you already have basic knowledge, even for beginners.

Artists support account: You can tag @Artistreccs on Twitter to request repost on your commissions or help to be seen. I can't guarantee they'll see your post but their account is made to help artists.

Fee calculator: VGEN Fee Calculator is a website that helps you calculate total VGen + other fees that will apply on your prices. It's customizable depending on your region and was created by @chziyan00.

I will update this list in the future with more links.

✦ OTHER DO'S & DON'TS ✦

Small advices that are self explanatory and that I didn't know where to put

DO

- Back up all files regularly
- Set boundaries (Time off, no NSFW refs, etc)
- Respond to clients promptly
- Set realistic deadlines
- Take breaks to avoid burnout
- Keep a list of repeat clients
- Be polite even with difficult clients
- Learn from feedback
- Take care of your wrist! Please do for real, you always think it won't happen to you until it does.

DON'T

- Take on more than you can handle
- Work without payment, a deposit or clear payment plan
- Share unfinished work publicly without permission
- Ignore client messages
- Undervalue your time or skill
- Compare yourself constantly to others
- Neglect your health for deadlines

✦ FINAL ADVICE & MOTIVATION ✦

Professional commissioning is a tough journey. This is not a magic recipe that will make you successful in one day. It takes time, consistency and discipline but if you're motivated enough, you can achieve anything. Really my best advice would be to find fun in this. I really enjoy my

job and I like to aim for the best, so I find satisfaction in tryharding all this. You can succeed even if you don't follow all of this though, whatever works for you!

I hope you all succeed and that this list was helpful for you <3

-Mei